

MDs called at last minute

By Jane Wolfe
Staff Writer of The News

The top members of the medical team chosen to X-ray and perform an autopsy on the remains in Lee Harvey Oswald's coffin Sunday came to Dallas from three states "at the last minute," their colleagues said.

The eight members of the team — four primary members and four doctors who assisted them — donated their services, said Jerry Pittman, a lawyer for Marina Oswald Porter. The examiners were paid only enough to cover their actual expenses, Pittman said.

British author Michael Eddowes, who raised speculation that the body in Oswald's grave was that of a Soviet spy, financed the exhumation.

The four top-ranking members of the team were Dr. Vincent DiMaio,

chief medical examiner in San Antonio and a former assistant to Dallas County medical examiner Dr. Charles Petty; Dr. Linda Norton, associate chief medical examiner in Birmingham, Ala., also a former assistant to Petty; Dr. Irving Sopher, chief medical examiner for West Virginia and a colleague of Petty; and Dr. James A. Cottone, associate professor of dental diagnostic science at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

"Dr. DiMaio is the most thorough forensic pathologist around, the best I've seen," said Gary Biggs, an assistant to DiMaio. "He won't jump to conclusions. If Dr. DiMaio says that's Oswald, then that's Oswald."

Examiners in Sopher's office in West Virginia said they were not surprised Sopher was chosen.

"Dr. Petty has known Dr. Sopher for a long time, but I'm sure the reason he was called to Dallas is he's a nationally known forensic expert with a strong background in dentistry," said Vasudeo Kshirsagar.

Sopher, 46, author of a book on forensic dentistry, was a medical examiner in Baltimore before becoming chief medical examiner for West Virginia in 1975.

The four doctors assisting the primary medical team included Dr. George Race, director of pathology, Baylor University Medical Center; Dr. Weldon Tillery, associate director of pathology, Baylor University Medical Center; Hamo Meguerditchian, forensic pathology assistant, Dallas County medical examiner's office; and Felix Cordero Jr., X-ray technician, University of Texas at San Antonio.